

Southeast Delco School District

Board & Community Update

DCIU Education Funding Press Conference

Delaware County Intermediate Unit (DCIU) held a press conference on Friday, January 20th to address charter and cyber charter schools, special education, pension reform, property tax elimination, and equity in schools. Dr. Butz joined with the superintendents from Interboro and Haverford School Districts, the vice president of William Penn School Board and the executive director of DCIU to present information that would initiate conversations to increase awareness, action and advocacy.



Dr. Butz received a letter from DCIU thanking him for delivering “a thought-provoking, useful presentation that demonstrated your grasp on the issues impacting public education in our county and across the state.”

Read Across America

Plans are underway for this year’s Read Across America celebration. Delcroft, Harris and Sharon Hill Schools will be holding their festivities on Thursday, March 2nd and Darby Township School will celebrate on Friday, March 3rd. Read Across America Day is a nationwide reading celebration that takes place annually on or around March 2nd —Dr. Seuss’ birthday. All across the country, schools, libraries, and community centers hold activities to share and encourage the joy of reading.

Board or community members who would like to be a guest reader at one of our elementary schools as part of their celebration can contact the school directly to schedule a time.

What’s Your Passion?

Students and staff of Academy Park High School will once again host a day of career exploration on Saturday, February 25th. Academy Park alumni will return to the district to share their knowledge and experience with students contemplating what path they should take once they have completed high school.

For those board members and staff that remember him, the “What’s Your Passion?” Festival is the result of former student and representative to the board Victor Ariyo and Academy Park math teacher Susan Reutter, who attended the Aspen Ideas Festival as Bezos Family Foundation Scholars in the summer 2014.



Susan Reutter and Victor Ariyo
at the Aspen Ideas Festival in 2014

Last year’s event was a resounding success and the expectation is that this year will be even better.

Staffing

Southeast Delco currently has 1 vacancy at Academy Park High School in the school security department. We are currently in round 2 of the interview process, which should be completed by February 10th. Interviews have also been conducted for a special education instructional aide and van driver that resulted in the selection of a candidate. The district has 55 days to address a projected



special education teacher vacancy resulting from a recent resignation. The need for class size reduction teachers has been identified at each of the grades 1-8 schools. Interviews for these positions have been conducted and successful candidates from round 1 have been invited to attend round 2 of the hiring process, which require candidates to perform a demonstration lesson.

We have successfully increased the number of building substitutes in all district schools. The building substitute teacher strategy has allowed the district to mitigate the impact of limited per-diem subs. The plan moving forward is to continue incentivizing candidates to serve as additional building subs in of our schools.

Aides, bus monitors, bus drivers, and food services positions are always in high demand and are regularly posted and filled.

Finance

Governor Wolf presented his 2017 / 2018 budget on February 7, 2017. Governor Wolf's proposed budget includes increases in basic education and special education funding, along with decreases in the transportation subsidy. If the governor's budget is approved as proposed, the district would receive approximately \$350,000 in additional basic education subsidy and approximately \$100,000 more in special education funding. Currently, there is no estimate available for the potential cuts to transportation funding.

The February 16, 2017 committee of the whole meeting will include an update on the district's 2017 / 2018 proposed budget. As in the past, the administration does not anticipate receiving the final state budget numbers prior to the adoption of the proposed budget, which is tentatively scheduled for the April 27, 2017 board meeting

Special Education

The special education program is designed to provide students with a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). When students have needs that cannot be addressed in their neighborhood schools, individualized education plan (IEP) teams look for more appropriate placements. These placements may be in specialized programs within the district or out of district at approved private schools (APS) and Delaware County Intermediate Units (DCIU) programs.



Southeast Delco prefers to place students at approved private schools (APS) because they may qualify for state subsidies, as opposed to DCIU programs that do not. The district has received state subsidized placements that offer a 40/60 split, with the district paying 40% of the cost. The district uses the following approved private schools: Wordsworth, Martin Luther, Devereux, and Elwyn, but must also rely on DCIU programs for placements. DCIU programs include The County Alternative, Glen Mills, Marple Education Center, and the Community School and New Pathways at Pennington.

Our costs for approved private schools have drastically increased, and due to financial issues at the state level, the district is being awarded fewer 40/60 splits. In addition, most approved private schools require that the district provide a personal care assistant (PCA) for each student enrolled in their program. Until recently all services provided to students - hearing, vision, occupational and physical therapy - were included in APS payments. Within the last two years however, the state ACCESS system changed their rules and APSs are no longer able to apply for ACCESS funds. This means that the district must now pay for services that would have been paid for by ACCESS.

This has caused great consternation for the special education department and district ACCESS coordinator. Presently, the ACCESS coordinator must identify all district service personnel working with students at an APS and enter them into the ACCESS database. She must then collect daily logs from staff members outside of the district and enter these logs into the ACCESS system. The process is difficult and time consuming.

The special education director meets regularly with each APS to ensure that students are making progress and receiving the services they need to be successful. This has become an uphill battle. The educational programming at the approved private schools has become less than stellar and these placements have become more of a holding place for our most disruptive students. Costs for these placements have skyrocketed, as well, increasing from around \$30,000 to \$65-\$70,000 per student, per year.

Placements for students at DCIU programs have always been expensive and the district has tried to limit the number of students placed in these programs. The Marple Education Center provides stellar programs for students with Autism. These placements usually cost the district over \$75,000 yearly, per student.



The district only places students with the most severe autism at the Marple Education Center. The County Alternative also provides excellent programming for our students. We only place students with the most severe emotional and mental health needs at The County Alternative. The programs at the Pennington School have changed over that last 4 years. The quality of their programs has decreased and the district is negotiating with Camelot to provide an improved, in-district program similar to those offered by Pennington Schools.

Just recently, the board approved a contract with Foundations - Life Works Program in Clifton Heights. The program is highly rated and we are hopeful that our students will be successful. This program costs approximately \$35,000 per student.

Data Driven

The district's data department is currently working with the teaching staff on the PA Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS) submission. This report is due to PIMS in mid-March. Once the data is submitted to PIMS, the Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) will process the data in their system for the LEA, schools and teachers to use to review their teachers' rosters.



The PVAAS verification phases begin on May 3rd and end on June 23rd. It's important for a teacher's rosters to accurately reflect all students in each tested grade and subject or course for a given school year and the proportion of responsibility for each state assessment. The verified rosters and the percent of instructional responsibility for each student are then used to generate teacher-specific PVAAS reports. These reports estimate the academic growth of a teacher's group of students. PVAAS is also a part of Pennsylvania's new Educator Effectiveness System which included the Teacher and Principal Evaluation System.

Also this past Monday, the Civil Rights data collection opened. This data collection is a federal requirement and asks districts to submit various academic, discipline, and enrollment data. The district uses this information to analyze where strengths are in the district and where we may need to devote more resources. The data collection is completed by both the data department and the office of the assistant superintendent.

Professional Development – February 17

During the district's next teacher in-service, professional development day on Friday, February 17th, Southeast Delco is excited to host best-selling author, internationally recognized keynote speaker, and professional developer, Dr. Robyn Jackson. As a former high school English teacher and middle school administrator, she is passionate about the profession of teaching. Dr. Jackson started Mindsteps, Inc., a professional development firm located in Washington, DC, so that she could help teachers and administrators understand the principles of mastery teaching and shows them how to apply these principles to help every student succeed. Dr. Jackson's mission is not to change how we teach, but to change the way that we think about teaching. She strives to renew confidence in our ability to connect with students and to recharge us in our roles as educators.

Dr. Jackson is the author of nine books including *Never Work Harder Than Your Students*. As a follow-up to her presentation, this book will be the focus of one of the book studies offered during our May 16 conference-style professional development day. *Never Work Harder Than Your Students* serves as a guide that helps us develop a master teacher mindset. Through reflections, Dr. Jackson helps us to determine where we are on our own journey to becoming master teachers, which steps we need to take to apply the principles of great teaching to our own practice, and how to advance to the next stage of our professional development.



Dr. Robin Jackson

Southeast Delco will also host representatives from Zaner-Bloser and Neshaminy School District. The group will be providing an overview of the Superkids program to all kindergarten and 1st and 2nd grade teachers across the district. The *Superkids Reading* program is a core literacy curriculum for kindergarten through second grade that teaches *all* aspects of reading seamlessly integrated with the language arts. Built on scientific research and proven pedagogy, it combines rigorous instruction with highly motivating materials.



Teachers at the Kindergarten Center and Darby Township School have been piloting the program this year. The goal of this presentation is to provide an opportunity for teachers to become familiar with the program and to obtain answers to questions by interacting with the company, Neshaminy teachers who have been using the program for several years, and Southeast Delco teachers who have been piloting this year.

In addition to these presentations, the professional development day will be devoted to teacher training and building-level preparations needed for the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). The PSSAs begin on April 3, 2017 and conclude May 5, 2017.

Future Board Meetings

Committee of the Whole	Thursday, February 16, 2017	6:00 PM
Board Business Meeting	Thursday, February 23, 2017	7:00 PM
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Board Business Meeting	Thursday, March 23, 2017	7:00 PM

School Events

- APHS Back to School Open House – Thursday, February 16th – 6 PM
- ***Teacher In-service – District-wide – No School for Students – Friday, February 17th***
- ***Presidents’ Day Holiday – No School for Students & Staff – Monday, February 20th***
- Progress Notices Issued – Friday, February 25th
- What’s Your Passion? Festival – Saturday, February 25th – APHS
- ***Early Dismissal – District-wide – Wednesday, March 1st – APHS – 11 AM / Grades K – 8 – 12:45 PM***
- Read Across America – Thursday, March 2nd – Delcroft, Harris and Sharon Hill Schools
- Read Across America – Friday, March 3rd – Darby Township Schools
- District Band Concert – Wednesday, March 8th – 7 PM – APHS
- Academy Park Frosh Dance – Thursday, March 16th – 7 PM – APHS
- Delaware County Spelling Bee – Saturday, March 18th – 9 AM – 2 PM – DCIU
- Academy Park Dodgeball Tournament – Friday, March 24th – 6 PM – APHS
- End of 3rd Marking Period – Friday, March 31st

- Spring Festival – Friday, April 7th – 6 PM – Academy Park High School
- End of 3rd Marking Period – Friday, April 7th
- Report Cards Issued – Friday, April 7th
- **Early Dismissal – Grades K – 8 – Monday, April 10th – 12:45 PM**
- Parent / Teacher Conferences – Grades K – 8 – Monday, April 10th
- **Early Dismissal – Grades K – 8 – Monday, April 11th – 12:45 PM**
- **Spring Break – No School for Students or Staff – Wednesday, April 12th – 17th**
- Parent / Teacher Night Conferences – Grades 9 – 12 – Wednesday, April 19th
- Junior Prom – Friday, April 21st – The Oaks Ballroom
- Early Kindergarten Registration – Tuesday, April 25th – Thursday, April 27th – Kindergarten Center
- District Musical – Friday, April 28th – 7:30 PM – Academy Park High School
- District Musical – Sunday, April 30th – 2 PM – Academy Park High School